

would like to think I have some track record of doing what I think is best for the country. So if it is a good deal, Israel and the Arabs will tell us, and I will gladly vote to approve it. But the construct, I say to Senator HOEVEN, is that to disapprove the deal, you have to get 60 votes. That means some Democratic colleagues have to join with Republicans to say this is not good enough, go back and try again. It is not that we want to end negotiations; we don't want to legitimize an industrial-strength nuclear program that is on the verge of a breakout such as North Korea in the making. We are not going to sit on the sidelines where a deal is negotiated where they have thousands of centrifuges and the only thing between them and a nuclear breakout is the United Nations. That did not work well in North Korea. We are not going to do that again.

So we are going to look at the deal. I think every Senator should want to look at the deal, and it allows your constituents to have a say. Not one person is having any input regarding the P5+1 talks. But if it comes back to the Congress, you have a person you can call. You can pick up the phone and call your Member of the House and Senate. You can say something about the deal because you are affected. It is not just Israel that is in the crosshairs of these people, it is us, the United States.

I worry they would share the technology with a terrorist organization and it would work its way here. Name one weapon they developed that they haven't shared with terrorists. This bipartisan approach is sound. It is consistent with what we have done 24 different times with other nations, and I hope we can have an overwhelming vote here soon.

Do your best job. Let us look at it. If it is a good deal, we will vote yes, and if it is a bad deal we will vote no, and try harder to get another deal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority's time has expired.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 30 seconds to wrap up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HOEVEN. I wish to thank my colleagues from South Carolina and New Hampshire. This is a bipartisan effort to join with the administration, and on a matter of this importance I believe Congress must be involved. So, again, we appeal to our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join with us on this effort.

I will conclude by saying we look forward very much to having the Prime Minister speak to us this morning.

Thank you, Mr. President.

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. For the information of the Senate, the Chair makes the following announcement:

The President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, pursuant to the provisions of section 201(a)(2) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, have appointed Dr. Homer Keith Hall as Director of the Congressional Budget Office, effective April 1, 2015, for the term expiring January 3, 2019.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH TO CONGRESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, at 11 a.m. this morning there will be a historic joint session of Congress. Usually a leader from some other country speaking at a joint session of Congress doesn't make history. It has happened over 100 times. I have attended many of those during the time I have served in the House and the Senate. What is historic about this session is that it was called unilaterally by the Republican Speaker of the House, JOHN BOEHNER. Usually and consistently, joint sessions of Congress have been called on a bipartisan basis and in most cases involve the administration and executive branch. In this case Speaker BOEHNER made history his own way by saying he would announce a joint session of Congress welcoming the Prime Minister of Israel.

I also checked with the Senate Historian, and it turns out there is another piece of history being made today. He can find no precedent where Members of Congress came forward from both the House and the Senate and announced publicly they would not attend a joint session of Congress, and that has happened today.

That is a personal and private decision by each Member of Congress as to whether they wish to attend the joint session this morning. I am going to attend it primarily because of my respect for the State of Israel and the fact that throughout my public career in the House and Senate, I have valued the bipartisan support of Israel which I found in both the House and the Senate.

I am proud that it was President Harry Truman—a Democrat—who was the first Executive in the world to recognize the nation of Israel. I am proud that throughout history Democratic and Republican Presidents alike have supported the State of Israel, and I have tried to do the same as a Member of the U.S. House and Senate.

This meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu comes at an awkward moment. He is 2 weeks away from a national election in Israel. Some have questioned the timing of this. I will not raise that question because I don't know the political scene in Israel. I don't know if this visit helps him or hurts him, but it is, in fact, 2 weeks away from this important election.

What we all agree on, I hope, both Democrats and Republicans, is one starting point: A nuclear Iran is unacceptable. We have to do everything we

can to stop that possibility because it would invite an arms race in the Middle East—many other countries would race to become nuclear powers, and that would be destabilizing—and also because we know the agenda of Iran. It has been engaged in terrorist activities throughout the Middle East and around the world. Putting a nuclear weapon in the hands of a country that is dedicated to terrorism is the kind of concern that I hope all of us share when we look to the future.

As Democrats and Republicans gather for the joint session, we are in common purpose: to stop the development of a nuclear Iran. What troubles me greatly is the criticisms I have heard on this floor and in the past week or two about the Obama administration and this issue. President Obama has made it clear from the start that he is opposed to having a nuclearized Iran. In fact, it was President Obama, using his power as President, who has really brought together the sanctions regime that is working to bring Iran to the negotiating table. He didn't do it alone, as one of my colleagues from South Carolina noted. There were times when Congress wanted to push harder than the President. But we have to concede the obvious: Were it not for the President's dogged determination, we would not have this alliance, this coalition imposing sanctions on Iran today that have made a difference and brought Iran to the negotiating table. Give President Obama credit for that. Whether it is Prime Minister Netanyahu or the Republicans, who are generally critical of the President, at least acknowledge the obvious. The President made his position clear that he opposes a nuclear Iran, and he made it clear that he would put his resources and energy into building a coalition to stop that possibility.

Secondly, it is this President's leadership which has created the Iron Dome defense—the missile defense—which has protected Israel. That has been a very effective defense mechanism. I know that as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, we appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars for that protection. President Obama initiated—if not initiated, was an early supporter of this effort and has funded it throughout his Presidency, and now it has kept Israel safe. I hope the Republicans and Prime Minister Netanyahu will give the administration credit for that effort to keep their nation safe.

I will also say about negotiations that here is the reality: We have countries around the world joining us in a regime to impose sanctions on Iran in order to bring Iran to the negotiating table, and they are there. The negotiations are at a delicate moment—literally weeks away from seeing whether we can move forward. I hope they are successful. The President has said at best there is a 50/50 chance of success. It is just that challenging. But let's consider what the alternative will be if negotiations fail.